

**Statement for the Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation**

**Hearing on the state of affairs at the
United States Olympic Committee**

January 28, 2003

Thank you Mr. Chairman for convening this very important hearing and thank you for allowing me to sit with your committee.

You might say that I, above most of my colleagues, have a vested interest in this issue, not only as a Senator in whose state the USOC is headquartered, and as a taxpayer, but as an Olympian as well. I take this whole sordid mess very personally. If medals were given for bickering and infighting, the people involved from the USOC deserve the gold.

Tonight, most of the English-speaking world will be listening to the President of the United States as he outlines an agenda to deal with issues of great importance: a potential war in Iraq, the

stagnated economy, homeland security, the burgeoning deficit, and the health and education of our people. These are just some of the difficult problems Congress must contemplate. America should not be distracted by what appears to be a state of dysfunction in the U.S. Olympic Committee.

My time as a member of the U.S. Olympic Team provided me with considerable opportunities that I might not otherwise have had and fostered lifelong friendships that I will always treasure.

Because of these memories, I decided that I would do what I could to help other athletes have the same experiences that I did.

I first started working to help the USOC as a member of the Colorado State Legislature where I worked on legislation providing a state income tax check-off to raise money for the USOC. I also worked on language to give tuition waivers to out-of-state student athletes training in Colorado and to waive in-state certification for doctors working at USOC headquarters.

Since I have been a member of Congress, Senator Stevens and I have been the strongest supporters of the Olympic movement. As members of the Appropriations Committee, we have been working for the last six years to provide the USOC with a new office building in Colorado Springs. We have worked to provide \$14 million for the USOC's drug-testing administration. We provide this money directly to USADA (United States Anti-Doping Agency) so that the ONDCP (Office of National Drug Control Policy) does not have administration powers or any other oversight.

The USOC often states with great pride that the government does not subsidize their efforts. Lets set the record straight. Although we do not directly subsidize, the federal government has become increasingly involved in the Olympics by providing billions in financial support for international sporting events both here in the United States and worldwide. For the recent Winter Games in Salt Lake City, the federal government allocated well over \$1.3 billion for infrastructure improvements, security, and other needs. This is compared to the \$75 million allocated for the 1984 Summer

Games in Los Angeles and the \$609 million for the 1996 Summer Games in Atlanta. We are also concerned with the continued safety of the U.S. athletes. Last year, Senator Stevens and I, while in Athens, directly questioned Greek cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister about the security precautions we are helping to finance for the upcoming Athens Olympiad.

I was literally raised in the Olympic movement and I must say, that in the over half a century that I have been a part of it, I have never known a time when it has been in more discord. It seems that for the last 15 years or so, most of what I've read about the USOC is how it is having one problem after another. In 1991, Bob Helmick was accused of accepting bribes and other improprieties. In the mid-90's, there was the need to hold hearings to make sure that the USOC was fulfilling its mission of providing equal opportunities to women and minorities. In 1998, it was the bribery and influence-peddling scandal engulfing Salt Lake's 2002 Winter Games bid. And for the last 2 years, it has been the constant change of leadership: the USOC has had three presidents and

four CEO's since 2000. There is no way our country's government, let alone a business or organization, could survive for long with that kind of turnover. Clearly the Olympic business is big business, and as with any big business, the management skills of its leaders will determine the success or failure of its agenda. To be sure, the IOC, the USOC, and the Olympic organizing committees are all different entities, but when the rings are tarnished, we all suffer.

My commitment to the Olympic ideal did not waiver when I came to Washington. At that time, which is no surprise, the USOC had problems with money management and a number of other things, including accusations of featherbedding and the padding of expense accounts. Former Senator Bill Bradley, Former Representative Tom McMillan, and I, formed a bipartisan caucus with other members who believed in the Olympic ideals to act as a buffer against any potential Congressional oversight of the Olympic team.

But because of the money and man-hours provided by the federal government and its agencies, and the fact that Congress chartered the USOC in 1978 with the passage of the Ted Stevens Amateur Sports Act, Congress has a larger vested interest in this. For 20 years I have opposed any federal oversight of the USOC decision-making process, but Mr. Chairman, the time has come to rethink that belief.

Congress does not demand that the USOC win gold medals, but we do have the expectation that you promote the USOC goals and be an inspiration for personal conduct of our young athletes. My idea of the Olympics promotes unity, comradery, sportsmanship, citizenship, and character. This Olympic-sized food fight and the incessant, petty squabbles and internal dissension are not indicative of the Olympic ideals that the USOC is chartered to represent and can only hurt the athletes.

I will tell every official here today from the USOC: this is not your personal team. I'll tell you who it does belong to: It belongs to

every boy and girl, who, as we speak, are working their hearts out on sand lots, wrestling mats, on tennis courts, and in swimming pools across America, and dreaming of the day that somewhere, sometime, they too will be able to march into a stadium behind the American flag.

It belongs to all of the moms and dads who drive endless miles, wait endless hours, and make the endless sacrifice so the dreams of their children can come true. It belongs to every American donor and sponsor who has followed the rags to fame stories of Jim Thorpe, Jessie Owens, Bob Mathias, Muhammad Ali, Mark Spitz, Wilma Rudolph, Florence Griffith-Joyner, and all those athletes that for over a century have personified what's best in America. The Olympic motto of Citius, Altius, Fortius for must not become Citius, Altius, Fortius, "Devious."

The USOC has lost its way and I'm beginning to wonder if a little government oversight might not be a bad idea. This is why we are having this hearing. I'm not exactly sure who is in charge at the

USOC; whether it's the CEO, the president, the executive committee, or the national governing bodies or similar organizations. Regardless of who is in charge, the line of authority is unclear, structural changes need to be made, and you need to get your house in order. Mr. Chairman, I have spoken to three members of the USOC Ethics Committee but have refused to speak to any of the antagonists who have complicated this issue by hiring attorneys. This is not a court of law and quite frankly, the introduction of attorneys into the dialogue will only make a media fiasco worse than it is already and further tarnish the image of the Olympic movement.

I again want to thank the Chairman and Senator Stevens for inviting me to participate, our witnesses for coming, and I will have a few questions at the appropriate time.